

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 EB-07 EPG-02 TRSE-00 STR-04
OMB-01 CEA-01 EURE-00 COME-00 /089 W
-----127920 201239Z /45

P 201135Z JUL 77

FM AMEMBASSY VALLETTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7521

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 VALLETTA 0819

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IT, MT, US

SUBJECT: ANDREOTTI VISIT: THE MALTA CONNECTION

1. WE ASSUME MALTA WILL NOT HAVE VERY HIGH PRIORITY
ON ANDREOTTI'S AGENDA FOR WASHINGTON VISIT, BUT IF
ITALIAN AMBASSADOR HERE IS CORRECT HE INTENDS IN ANY
EVENT TO RAISE THE ISSUE.

2. THIS EMBASSY HAS LITTLE TO ADD TO WHAT WE HAVE
PREVIOUSLY REPORTED ON THE ITALIAN POSITION. MINTOFF'S
JUNE 30 DEADLINE FOR ACTION BY FRENCH AND ITALIANS HAS
PASSED WITHOUT FURTHER MINTOFF CHARGES OF NON-PERFORMANCE,
POSSIBLY BECAUSE MINTOFF HAS BEEN HEAVILY PREOCCUPIED
WITH DOMESTIC PROBLEMS. HOWEVER HE ALSO HAS IN HAND A
LATE-JUNE REAFFIRMATION IN PRINCIPLE BY ITALIANS
AND FRENCH OF THEIR NEUTRALITY GUARANTEE, WITH AN
OPENING TO POSSIBLE FRENCH/ITALIAN PARTICIPATION IN A BROADER
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MULTILATERAL GUARANTEE OF SOME SORT. MOREOVER FRENCH AND
ITALIANS HAVE RECENTLY BOTH HAD COMMERCIAL/INVESTMENT
DELEGATIONS HERE, THUS DEMONSTRATING A WILLINGNESS TO
CONTINUE DISCUSSIONS ON MEANS OF IMPLEMENTING THEIR
COMMITMENT IN PRINCIPLE TO HELP ASSURE MALTA'S ECONOMIC
VIABILITY AFTER 1979.

3. NEITHER GOVERNMENT, HOWEVER, TO OUR KNOWLEDGE HAS GONE BEYOND CAREFULLY RESERVED EXPRESSIONS OF SUPPORT IN PRINCIPLE FOR THE MALTESE REQUEST FOR GRANT AID FOR THE YEARS 1979-81 TO BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN THE TIME THE NATO RENTAL ENDS AND THE MALTESE ECONOMY SUPPOSEDLY MANAGES ON ITS OWN. THE FRENCH APPEAR TO HAVE MADE IT CLEAR THEY WILL HAVE NO PART OF THIS. LOCALLY THE ITALIAN AMBASSADOR TALKS OF AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE FOR THIS FROM THE GERMANS, BUT WE HAVE NOT MUCH TO SUPPORT THIS AND THERE HAS BEEN NO REAL DISCUSSION AS YET AMONG THE NINE ON THIS OR INDEED ON ANY OTHER ASPECT OF "WHITHER MALTA."

4. MEANWHILE THE MALTESE CLAIM THE LIBYANS ARE READY NOW TO COME FORWARD WITH THEIR SHARE OF A NORTH-SOUTH FINANCIAL PACKAGE, BUT OUR OWN READING OF WHAT WE HAVE SEEN ON THIS SUGGESTS THAT THEY HAVE HARDLY SIGNED ANY BLANK CHECKS FOR MINTOFF, NOR DO THEY SEEM LIKELY TO DO SO. QADHAFI WANTS INFLUENCE HERE, YES, BUT ON THE CHEAP (AS HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE CASE), AND WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT WHAT WE HEAR FROM THE ITALIANS LOCALLY AS TO THE URGENCY OF RESPONDING TO MINTOFF'S DEMANDS LEST HE SIGN ON WITH THE LIBYANS IS MORE MINTOFF'S TIME-WORN TACTICS AS INTERPRETED BY ITALIAN AMBASSADOR DA-RIN THAN ANY IMMEDIATE DANGER TO WESTERN INTERESTS.

5. SO WE REITERATE WHAT WE HAVE SAID BEFORE, MOST RECENTLY
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IN VALLETTA'S 711. WE BELIEVE WE CAN, WITH BOTH EQUANIMITY AS TO OUR OWN INTERESTS AND WITH LOGIC AS TO THE MERITS OF THE ISSUE, CONTINUE A POSTURE OF NONINVOLVEMENT, KEEPING AN OPTION OPEN AS TO A POSSIBLE US SUPPORTIVE ROLE LATER, BUT MAKING IT CLEAR TO THE ITALIANS AND OTHERS IN EUROPE THAT WE SEE IT BOTH NATURAL AND FEASIBLE THAT THEY

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 VALLETTA 0819

CARRY THE DIRECT FINANCIAL BURDEN OF WHATEVER IS NEEDED
(ASSUMING ANY IS NEEDED) IN GRANT AID TO HELP MALTA WEATHER THE
1979 TRANSITION. THERE HAS BEEN ABSOLUTELY NO WEAKENING OF
MINTOFF'S STAND ON THE 6TH FLEET ISSUE, AND WE ARE NOT REPEAT
NOT PRESSING THIS. ON THE OTHER HAND, WE DO NOT SEE
MINTOFF TAKING ANY CAPRICIOUS ACTION UNDERMINING OUR
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE OF SOVIET DENIAL, CERTAINLY NOT BY A
UNILATERAL GESTURE TO THE SOVIETS. NOR DO WE SEE MUCH
LIKELIHOOD OF HIS SIGNING ON TO A UNILATERAL LIBYAN SUPPORT-
TIVE ARRANGEMENT. HE HAS ALREADY WEAKENED HIS SUPPORT AMONG
HIS DOMESTIC BODY POLITIC SUFFICIENTLY BY HIS RECENT
HANDLING OF DOMESTIC ISSUES WITHOUT SUCH MOVES
TOWARD LIBYA THAT WOULD BE DECIDEDLY UNPOPULAR HERE. AND
MINTOFF IS WELL AWARE THAT HIS OWN CONCEPT FOR MALTA AS A
SYMBOLIC IF NOT THAT MUCH OF A SUBSTANTIVE CENTER FOR PEACE
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AND COOPERATION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REQUIRES AT LEAST AN
EQUAL EUROPEAN PARTICIPATION TO HAVE ANY RATIONALE OR
CHANCE OF RECOGNITION.

6. HAVING SAID ALL THAT, WE CONCLUDE IT WOULD BE USEFUL
INDEED TO HEAR FROM THE ANDREOTTI/FORLANI LEVEL WHAT ITALIAN
POLICY TOWARD MALTA REALLY IS. WE DON'T KNOW THAT MUCH
ABOUT IT, AND TOO MUCH OF WHAT WE THINK WE KNOW IS WHAT WE
HEAR FROM AMBASSADOR DA-RIN -- WHO MORE OFTEN THAN NOT
SEEMS TO BE WELL OUT AHEAD OF HIS OWN GOVERNMENT IN SUPPORT
FOR MINTOFF'S OBJECTIVES. LAINGEN

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